

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 SAM-01 SAB-01 ACDA-05 PM-04

NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

DODE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 /065 W

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O R 271435Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4715

USMISSION USUN IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAMASCUS 3776

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, US, IS, EG

SUBJECT: SHEEHAN INTERVIEW WITH PRES. ASAD

1. SUMMARY: JOURNALIST EDWARD SHEEHAN SPENT MORE THAN FIVE HOURS INTERVIEWING PRES. ASAD, SEPTEMBER 26-27. ASAD INDICATED HE WOULD COMMUNICATE HIS POSITION ON FURTHER GOLAN NEGOTIATIONS TO SECRETARY KISSINGER WITHIN TWO-THREE DAYS, THAT HE WAS UNCERTAIN BUT CURIOUS ABOUT SECRETARY'S PROPOSAL FOR INFORMAL MULTI-LATERAL CONTACTS, THAT HE WOULD WELCOME ISRAELI EVACUATION OF ONE OR TWO SETTLEMENTS BUT THREE KILOMETER WITHDRAWAL ALONG ENTIRE DISENGAGEMENT LINE WOULD NOT SATISFY SYRIAN PUBLIC, THAT SYRIAN MOVES WOULD HAVE TO BE COORDINATED WITH PLO AND JORDAN, THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR WEST BANK NEGOTIATIONS IS PLO'S AND THAT HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT "IMMENSITY" OF U.S. ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL. END SUMMARY.

2. JOURNALIST EDWARD SHEEHAN SPENT MORE THAN FIVE HOURS IN TALKS WITH ASAD LATE EVENING/EARLY  
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MORNING SEPT. 26-27. FOLLOWING COMMENTS PASSED TO EMBASSY

PRIOR TO HIS EARLY DEPARTURE FOR JORDAN SEPT. 27 REFLECT WHAT SHEEHAN FELT TO BE HIGHLIGHTS OF ASAD'S RESPONSES AS THEY RELATE TO CURRENT NEGOTIATING EFFORTS.

3. GOLAN NEGOTIATIONS

IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS WHETHER SYRIA WILLING TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAEL ABOUT GOLAN, ASAD REPLIED THAT "NICETIES REQUIRE DR. KISSINGER BE ADVISED OF OUR POSITION ON THIS SUBJECT BEFORE WE ANNOUNCE IT IN ANY OTHER FORUM. PERHAPS IN THE NEXT TWO OR THREE DAYS WE SHALL COMMUNICATE OUR POSITION TO DR. KISSINGER".

4. INFORMAL, MULTILATERAL CONTACTS

"DR. KISSINGER DID NOT DISCUSS THIS WITH US, SO IT IS NOT CLEAR EXACTLY WHAT HE MEANT WITH REGARD TO WHAT HE SAID IN HIS UN SPEECH. FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT PARTIES DOES HE MEAN, HOW ARE THEY TO MEET, WHAT WILL THEY DISCUSS, AND UNDER WHAT LEGITIMACY ARE THEY TO MEET?"

5. FONMIN ALLON'S STATEMENT

"ISRAEL HAS BEEN ASKING TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE ARABS SINCE 1948. THERE IS NOTHING NEW IN THIS. HOWEVER, WHEN ALLON SAYS 'NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PRE-CONDITIONS', HE FORGETS THAT HE IS CALLING FOR PRE-CONDITIONS BECAUSE ISRAEL IS OCCUPYING OUR LAND AND REFUSING TO WITHDRAW IN VIOLATION OF THE UN CHARTER AND UN RESOLUTIONS, WHICH IS ITSELF A PRE-CONDITION. SO YOU SEE, IT IS ISRAEL, NOT THE ARABS, WHICH IS ITSELF IMPOSING PRE-CONDITIONS."

6. RENEWAL OF UNDOF

"THIS SUBJECT IS UNDER DISCUSSION NOW. NO FINAL DECISIONS HAVE BEEN MADE."

7. THREE KILOMETER WITHDRAWAL ALONG ENTIRE DISENGAGEMENT LINE  
WHEN ASKED WHETHER HE WOULD AGREE TO A THREE KILOMETER WITHDRAWAL ALONG ENTIRE DISENGAGEMENT LINE, ASAD RESPONDED THAT "WE SHOULD NOT GET LOST IN THESE PARTIAL MATTERS. WE OWN THE LAND AND WE HAVE OUR RIGHTS. THE BATTLE FOR THREE KILOMETERS AND FOR THE WHOLE OF GOLAN IS THE SAME  
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BATTLE WHETHER IT IS A MILITARY OR POLITICAL BATTLE. SO WHY SHOULD EFFORTS BE DISPERSED LIKE THIS, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT HAS BECOME CLEAR AFTER THE SINAI AGREEMENT THAT THESE PARTIAL SOLUTIONS ARE IN THE INTEREST OF ISRAEL AND NOT THE ARABS? I HAVE GIVEN YOU THE DIRECTION OF AN ANSWER, BUT NOT AN ANSWER. HOWEVER, THE DIRECTION IS ONE THING AND AN ANSWER THAT COMMITS US IS SOMETHING ELSE." LATER ASAD NOTED THAT "IF I HELD A REFERENDUM

IN SYRIA ON A THREE KILOMETER WITHDRAWAL, IT WOULD NOT  
GET TEN VOTES. WE CAN DO WITHOUT THREE KILOMETERS  
AND THE REST OF GOLAN UNTIL THE ISRAELIS WITHDRAW  
FROM ALL OF IT. IT IS NOT NECESSARY FOR OUR ECONOMY."

8. ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS ON GOLAN  
WHEN ASKED FOR SYRIA'S POSITION ON ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL

DFOM ONE OR TWO GOLAN SETTLEMENTS, ASAD REPLIED, "WE  
HAVE NO OBJECTION IF THEY WITHDRAW FROM ONE OR TWO  
SETTLEMENTS. WE WOULD WELCOME IT." SHEEHAN NOTED THAT  
ISRAELIS WOULD WITHDRAW ONLY WITHIN CONTEXT OF NEGOTIATED  
AGREEMENT, AND ASAD RESPONDED, "THIS IS WHAT REQUIRES  
DISCUSSION".

9. LINKING GOLAN SETTLEMENT TO JORDANIAN AND PALESTINIAN ISSUES  
"ANYTHING WE DO WOULD ONLY BE IN AGREEMENT WITH THE PLO.  
IN ANY PEACE EFFORT THE PLO MUST BE A MAIN PARTY ON THE  
SAME LEVEL AS EGYPT AND SYRIA. A FINAL SETTLEMENT WILL  
HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED ONLY WHEN THE RIGHTS OF ALL, NOT OF  
SOME, ARE ENSURED. OUR JOINT WORK WITH JORDAN AIMS  
ULTIMATELY TOWARD ACHIEVING COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL, INCLUDING  
WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WEST BANK. BUT ON THE UNDERSTANDING  
THAT NEITHER WE NOR THE JORDANIANS HAVE ANY TRUSTEESHIP  
OVER THE WEST BANK AND THAT NEITHER WE NOR JORDAN NEGOTIATE  
FOR THE WEST BANK BECAUSE THIS RESPONSIBILITY BELONGS  
TO THE PLO."

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4716  
USMISSION USUN IMMEDIATE  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 DAMASCUS 3776

10. FINAL PEACE WITH ISRAEL

"WE ARE READY TO LIVE IN PEACE WITH ISRAEL IN EXCHANGE  
FOR TOTAL WITHDRAWAL, BUT NOT TO RECOGNIZE ISRAEL --  
NEVER, NEVER, NEVER." ASKED FOR HIS REACTION IF A  
FUTURE SYRIAN GENERATION SHOULD DECIDE TO RECOGNIZE  
ISRAEL, ASAD STATED, "I AM A DEMOCRAT. IF THEY WANT  
THAT, WHO AM I TO STOP THEM."

11. U.S. ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL

SHEEHAN STATED THAT ALL DURING FIVE HOURS ASAD RETURNED  
TO SUBJECT OF "IMMENSITY" OF U.S. AID TO ISRAEL IN  
MIDST OF HEAVY BURDENS ON U.S. TAXPAYER AND GREAT  
UNEMPLOYMENT. ASAD ALSO CONTRASTED ISRAELI ASSISTANCE  
LEVEL, WHICH HE VIEWED AS PERPETUATING ISRAELI OCCUPATION,  
WITH RESTRICTIONS ON AID TO TURKEY AFTER CYPRUS INVATION  
AND INABILITY OF JORDAN TO OBTAIN HAWK MISSILES.

12. RELATIONS WITH EGYPT

"SADAT IS STILL MY FRIEND BUT HE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE  
IN ACCEPTING TERMS OF SINAI AGREEMENT. SYRIA CANNOT  
COOPERATE WITH EGYPT UNTIL EGYPT REVOKES THE AGREEMENT.  
EGYPT HAS ABSOLVED ITSELF FROM RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF ARAB  
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SOLIDARITY."

13. COMMENT: IT WAS SHEEHAN'S IMPRESSION THAT ASAD  
SOUNDED INTRANSIGENT, ALTHOUGH TONE OF DISCUSSIONS WAS  
HUMOROUS AND EVEN LIGHT-HEARTED. ASAD SEVERAL TIMES  
MENTIONED HIS ESTEEM FOR DR. KISSINGER. PROBLEM WAS,  
ACCORDING TO ASAD, THAT DR. KISSINGER IN THEIR FIRST  
FEW MEETINGS SEEMED "NOT DESIROUS OF SMALL STEPS"  
WHEREAS NOW CONTRARY WAS TRUE. SHEEHAN FELT, HOWEVER,  
THAT ASAD HAD LEFT DOOR OPEN TO NEGOTIATIONS NO MATTER  
HOW DIFFICULT THEY MIGHT BE.

14. SHEEHAN STATED THAT 800-1000 WORD ARTICLE ON  
INTERVIEW MAY APPEAR IN NEW YORK TIMES AS EARLY AS  
SUNDAY. HE PROMISED TO PASS COPY TO AMB. PICKERING.  
ALL ADDRESSEES ARE ENJOINED STRICTLY TO PROTECT  
FOREGOING SUMMARY OF HIS INTERVIEW UNTIL AFTER PUBLICATION.  
MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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